

## Divide deepens in states over COVID mask and vaccination mandates

As the [COVID-19] crisis grinds toward its third lethal year, states have shown little letup in their approaches to the emergency. The states that embraced restrictions to protect public health are poised to continue to do so in the coming year. Those intent on ensuring the pandemic does not impinge on what they regard as individual autonomy will continue to do so in 2022.

“We’re not really seeing states change course [in response to omicron] in terms of their policies and approaches in dealing with COVID overall,” said Jennifer Tolbert, director of state health reform at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

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“For the most part, states that have imposed social distancing and have had masking and vaccine policies—or allowed local governments to institute them—are not changing those policies,” Tolbert said. “And states opposed to statewide masking and vaccine policies and social distancing continue to oppose them.”

Underlining that last point and expressing the sentiment of many of his fellow Republican governors, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* earlier this month that no matter what damage omicron inflicts, he has no intention of ordering lockdowns or mask or vaccine mandates.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.\*\*](#)